

**'Factors influencing book selection decisions by  
academic librarians in an Arabic Islamic context'**

**by**

**Niall Gerard Flanigan**

Submitted to the School of Information Management,  
Victoria University of Wellington  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Information Studies

**February 2011**

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Chapter 1	Introduction
1.1	Definition of relevant terms ..... 1
1.2	Background to the study..... 2
1.3	Research problem..... 5
1.4	Study objectives and research questions.... 7
Chapter 2	Literature Review
2.1	The library..... 8
2.2	The librarian..... 12
2.3	The community..... 14
2.4	Belief in intellectual freedom..... 17
2.5	Conclusion ..... 20
Chapter 3	Methodology
3.1	Research description ..... 22
3.2	Method of gathering data..... 23
3.3	Research population..... 24
3.4	Pilot interview..... 25
3.5	Instrumentation..... 26
3.6	Treatment of data..... 27
3.7	Ethical considerations..... 28
3.8	Reliability and validity..... 29
3.9	Limitations..... 30
Chapter 4	Data analysis Part A

4.1	Research question 1: What procedures for book selections are practiced in nine UAE academic libraries? .....	31
4.1.1	Collection development policies.....	31
4.1.2	Influences on selection decisions.....	32
4.2	Research question 2: How are selection decisions affected by the variables of	
4.2.1	the library.....	36
4.2.2	the librarian .....	38
4.2.3	the community .....	39
4.2.4	the belief in intellectual freedom? .....	41
Chapter 5	Data analysis Part B	
5.1	Research question 3: What criteria do librarians use when making a personal judgement about specific books? .....	43
5.1.1	Responses to books .....	43
5.1.2	Analysis of findings on criteria for decisions .....	55
5.1.3	Evidence from collection development policies .....	61
5.2	Research question 4: How do librarians rationalise selection decisions in the light of intellectual freedom beliefs? .....	64
Chapter 6	Discussion and conclusion .....	69

Bibliography .....	75
Appendix 1: List of titles and synopses.....	80
Appendix 2: Interview questions .....	83
Appendix 3: Information sheet .....	85
Appendix 4: Participant consent form .....	86

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Dan Dorner, for his ongoing encouragement, his expert guidance, and his perceptive insights into the issues with which this study deals. This project would not have been accomplished without his support.

I would also like to thank the nine librarians who gave their time and well-informed opinions to take part in the survey which formed the basis of this study. Without their input there could have been no study.

## **Abstract**

There are many factors to be taken into account when making selection decisions in an academic library including curriculum need, suitability of content, user interest, and academic input. Academic librarians in the Muslim Arabic country of the United Arab Emirates face the added challenge of making judgements about the suitability of the content in view of the community in which they work. In the absence of comprehensive collection development policies librarians are at times required to make decisions based on the sometimes conflicting demands of traditional Muslim values and their own beliefs about intellectual freedom. In this study nine academic librarians were asked to consider the suitability of twelve books and to offer criteria for their decision. A range of variables was also explored to identify possible relationships between the variables and selection decisions. The variables appearing to have an effect on decisions include the gender and nationality of the student population, and the nationality and religion of the librarian.

**Keywords:** academic libraries, Arabic, Muslim, book selection

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Definition of Relevant Terms**

The following terms need definition or clarification in this study to ensure that readers have the same understanding as the author:

The UAE	The United Arab Emirates
emirate	a political territory that is ruled by a Muslim leader
Emirati	the name for the nationals of the UAE
sheikh	a member of a ruling family
Sharia	the sacred law of Islam and the basis of the legal system in Islamic countries
academic library	a library serving a tertiary level institution

The words ‘Muslim’ and ‘Islamic’ are used interchangeably

## **1.2 Background to the study**

This chapter provides an introduction to the study, and includes essential background information which is followed by a description of the problem being investigated. The research objectives and questions are then presented.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a new country, created in 1971. Its population is 8.19 million and growing rapidly, doubling every 8.7 years compared to 55 years for world population ([www.uaeinteract.com](http://www.uaeinteract.com)). Ninety six percent of the population is Muslim and Arabic is the official language. It is a very diverse society: currently less than 20% of the population is the local Emirati, the remaining 80% being made up of the 202 different nationalities (Emirates Economist newspaper, August 2006), which makes the UAE unusual and not without challenge as a place to live and work.

In a country less than 40 years old the field of library and information science is relatively undeveloped, resulting in an absence in many cases of formal policies and clear guidelines. A national library association does not exist, and of the 34 countries listed with International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) as having a code of ethics, the UAE is not among them.

Librarians in the UAE are faced with having to reconcile two somewhat contradictory forces: the right to intellectual freedom as stated in the International Federation of Library Associations



Statement on Libraries (Byrne, 2000, p.62) alongside laws which run counter to this. According to Davidson (2008), in the UAE “an atmosphere of secrecy prevails, as a number of conservative, anachronistic bodies seek tight control over the flow of information.”

The sheikhs of the ruling families and the religious leaders can be considered as the ‘conservative, anachronistic bodies’. Because the UAE is not a democracy and is one of the few countries in the world where there is no suffrage at all, a large amount of power is held by the sheiks.

An indication of the ‘tight control over the flow of information’ can be detected in the UAE’s Publications Law (1980), from which pertinent examples follow:

It is prohibited to publish any work that :

- criticises the Head of State or Rulers of the Emirates (Article 70)
- involves instigation against Islam or the system of ruling, or causes harm to the interest of the state or the values of society (Article 71)
- gives opinions that violate public discipline and order, or involve insult to teenagers, or call for or circulate subversive ideas (Article 72)
- blemishes the president of an Arab, Islamic or any other friendly state (Article 76)
- defames Arabs and their civilization and heritage (Article 77)
- causes harm to the national currency, or causes damage to the national economy (Article 81)

- includes phrases, expressions or pictures that are inconsistent with public conduct, or otherwise misleading (Article 82)

Further, the UAE ranked quite low on the freedom of the press list compiled by Reporters Sans Frontières in 2009, being at 86th out of 175 countries, on a par with Uganda and Albania.

Although publishing a book is not the same as selecting a book for purchasing, the details above provide an indication of the political environment in which librarians work.

Librarians within this somewhat contradictory and multi-national environment may seek to “ensure that the selection and availability of library materials and services is governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral and religious views” (IFLA, 1999 in Byrne, 2000, p. 63). If there is not a common understanding of ‘community standards’ or well defined principles guiding book selection in the UAE, such decisions may be based on varying beliefs about acceptability.

The aim of this study is to reveal current practices of book selection by investigating the practices across a range of academic libraries and exploring why they are performed in the way they are.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

The United Arab Emirates is an Arabic, Islamic country yet many of the librarians working in academic libraries are from non-Arabic, non-Islamic cultures. From my observations from seven years of working in three institutions in Dubai, librarians and others in academic institutions have raised concerns about responsibility for book selection decisions. While undergoing rapid modernisation the UAE is, at the same time, a country which still maintains conservative Muslim values. Many expatriates have confused modernisation with westernisation and have made inappropriate choices of behaviour: librarians are not free from this. A bad decision can result in termination of a contract and cancellation of a work visa, with the need then to leave the country. In my experience librarians debate the extent to which Muslim values should determine book selection practice, while others believe book selection should be grounded in the idea of intellectual freedom. In the absence of an explicit collection development policy, decisions may be based on personal judgement which draws on an understanding of community standards. As the UAE is a very diverse society, the application of community standards raises the question of “whose community?” It is possible therefore that decisions in academic libraries will differ according to the demographics of the student and

general population, specifically whether the student population is male, female or mixed, and if the library is located in an urban or rural environment.

Another major factor is the religious status of the students and the librarian. If the librarian is not a member of the Muslim religion and Arabic culture, decisions may be based on inaccurate assumptions, resulting in varying and inconsistent practice. When making personal judgements librarians need to take into account the strong influence of the religious and political leaders or they may face unexpected consequences. Rejection or selection of a book by the collection librarian may be based on what is believed to be acceptable in the view of the religious and political leaders.

The problem being investigated in this study is the conflict between traditional Muslim values and the values of intellectual freedom which librarians face when making selection decisions. Currently no study exists on how selection decisions are made by collection librarians in the UAE or on identifying the variables related to book selection.

#### **1.4 Study Objectives and Research Questions**

This is an exploratory study with the following objectives:

- to reveal current practices of book selection in a range of academic libraries;
- to identify the variables relating to book selection decisions;
- to discover on what basis or criteria decisions are made.
- to determine how librarians rationalise selection decisions in the light of intellectual freedom beliefs.

The following research questions are derived from these objectives.

- 1      What procedures for book selections are practiced in nine UAE academic libraries?
- 2      How are selection decisions affected by the variables of
  - the library
  - the librarian
  - the community
  - the belief in intellectual freedom?
- 3      What criteria do librarians use when making a personal judgement about specific books?
4.     How do how librarians rationalise selection decisions in the light of intellectual freedom beliefs?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

An analysis of the literature points to potential factors affecting book selection decisions and provides a framework for this research. The conceptual framework of this study consists of a range of variables and the effect they have on book selection decisions.

Although the literature on collection development is extensive (Munro and Phillips, p. 153) the four factors I focus on are limited to the library, the librarian, the community and the belief in intellectual freedom. These four areas echo the variables identified by Serebnick (1979) namely, the librarian, the library, the community leader, the community and community action, the mass media, and judicial and legal (p.116, cited in Sullivan, 2007, p.11).

I now consider the literature surrounding each of these four factors, particularly literature based on the Arabic or Islamic context, where it exists.

#### **2.1 The library**

An obvious factor in a library's collection is its budgetary constraints, but this study is looking beyond that to other factors influencing book selection including its collection policy, the curriculum needs of students, and the input of academics. I now discuss the literature surrounding each of these factors.

A collection development policy expresses the mission and role of a library which underlies book selection. Policies reflect the way in which the role of a library is perceived in the local context. As Osborne and Gorman noted, “formal, written library policies are statements about decisions the library has made in relation to functions it performs or services it provides” (2006, p.73). They noted however that even when policies exist they are not always current or well used.

If the policy "provides the rationale for selection of individual items" as stated in Snow (1996, p.193) then it is a pertinent factor to include in my study. However not all writers agreed that they play a useful role. Snow argued that policies are unnecessary but nevertheless remain part of the ‘creed of librarianship’ (p.191). His article reported on four different surveys in the USA of collection development policies. Of interest is the 1988 survey of small and medium-sized libraries which showed that of the 107 responses, 58% had some sort of collection development policy. The sample for this survey however only included self-selected libraries, so necessarily contained a certain bias.

In their analysis of criteria for selection for mobile libraries, Davidson and Dorner (2009) revealed that five of the six participants did not refer to their library’s selection policies. Through interviews with librarians in New Zealand mobile libraries, this study also indicated they based their selection decisions on experience and knowledge of the clients, as well as input from other librarians. User wants were a

strong consideration for most participants. Like studies of this kind it was limited by its size.

Literature from the Middle East and other Muslim countries is less plentiful but adds some support to these findings on collection policy. Siddiqui (1998) carried out a survey of seven academic libraries in Saudi Arabia and noted that only four of the seven had written Library Policy Manuals. He also commented that the collections of six of the seven libraries were below standard, and suggested that one of the reasons for this situation includes the lack of collection building plans.

As well as collection decisions being guided by explicit policies, they must obviously also take into account curriculum needs. In the UAE, a major collection development project was undertaken by the American University of Sharjah (the neighbouring emirate to Dubai). One of its aims was to build a collection that supports an American style education while remaining relevant to the values and interests of the students and academic staff, but unfortunately the authors did not elaborate on this, only mentioning that collection development policies were developed by identifying gaps in the collection by doing a count of volumes in various call number ranges (Gyeszly and Matthews, 2003).

A survey by Gyeszly (2010) of Qatar's six university libraries gave details of collections but the author did not consider collection



development other than referring to it meeting the curriculum, research service and leisure needs.

The input of academics also impacts on collection decisions to a greater or lesser extent. In Pakistan the role of the library is perceived to be the more traditional one of collecting, housing, and preserving books for future users more than of meeting current user needs (Ameen, 2010). Selections generally are made following conventional selection practices, with academic staff playing more of a role than librarians which suggests decisions are based on curriculum needs. There are 'ample funds' from the government for acquisitions (p.8), but collection evaluation is overlooked in most of the 30 libraries surveyed. This finding suggests that decisions about selections are not considered to be a major concern of librarians, and given the more homogeneous nature of Pakistani society it is unlikely librarians would face the contradictions and concerns librarians in the UAE do.

In looking at the relative role of academics and librarians in terms of collection development in eight Australian academic libraries, Munro and Philips (2008) examined current practice by interviewing collection managers about the roles of academic and library staff, collection development policies, and the process of selection. From these data two models of collection responsibility, involving either library or academic staff, were created and compared with an American model. Flowcharts were presented to clearly illustrate the process in each of the eight universities, providing a good summary of

their findings. Strengths and weaknesses of each model were discussed and supported by the literature. Conclusions were that a good relationship between academic staff and librarians contributed to collection development and meeting users' needs. It is important to bear in mind though that the data were obtained from interviews with library staff only and not with academic staff.

To sum up this section, although libraries may or may not have a collection development policy it is not always used. Curriculum needs often guide decisions and academics play a role in selection to a greater or lesser extent.

## **2.2 The Librarian**

It is the librarian who has ultimate responsibility for book selection and in the absence of strong policies decisions may be made by personal choice. The following section reviews literature discussing librarians' selection decisions based on instinct, intuition, personal judgement or bias.

The literature debates the role of personal choice and self-censorship in selection. For example, Byrne (2003) argued against personal choice but in favour of the need for selection policies to guide librarians in their purchase decisions. He wrote that policies should reflect users' needs and interests and not other factors such as political acceptability. Thus decisions are not based on a librarian's bias or desire to avoid controversy. He believes a clear policy can solve ethical dilemmas for

librarians, particularly when items are personally objectionable. Bucher and Manning (2007) considered non-selection of books based on personal choice or perceptions of community standards as a form of 'gate-keeping' and saw it as a form of censorship, which they do not support. Moody (2004) warned against librarians' beliefs influencing selection decisions and recommends that librarians become aware of their own beliefs in order to remove bias from decisions. She expressed concern that librarians self-censor perhaps unconsciously or more deliberately when faced with challenges from colleagues or the community. This perspective is supported by Allen who remarked that "we must all become censors of ourselves" and be alert to what may predetermine our decisions without our conscious knowledge (2007, p. 5). Thus, librarians in using their personal judgement may in fact be playing the role of censor.

Whether it is desirable or not, it appears that librarians do in fact use intuition or instinct. In her study of classification decisions Greenland (2009) looked at decision theory and how it can be applied to book selection and classification. The point was made that decision making takes place in a context, which may include colleagues' input, professional training, book reviews and other literature, community standards and personal judgement. Explicit policies may limit an individual's role but other factors such as time, money, and cognitive ability may result in decisions that are not necessarily rational. This is relevant because it provides an explanation for why librarians may use 'gut instinct' as a basis for a decision.

Evidence of this was found in the Davidson and Dorner study (2009) of six librarians mentioned earlier, which revealed that librarians are influenced by their personal views in their selection decisions and that all of the participants preferred “an intuitive rather than scientific” approach to selection (p.57).

What is not made explicit in the literature surveyed is if a relationship exists between personal choice and personal variables such as religion, nationality and beliefs in intellectual freedom.

To sum up this section, while some writers supported or acknowledged the influence of librarians’ personal judgement in selection decisions, others considered it a form of censorship. It is clear that a librarian’s personal judgement, instinct or intuition must be another factor to consider when identifying the criteria on which decisions are made.

### **2.3 The community**

A library does not exist in isolation but should be viewed in the context of the community it serves and may be funded by. The notion of community standards plays a role in decision making, and the following section reviews the literature on this.

As Sullivan commented, a clear definition of the concept of community standards has not been achieved (2007, p. 17). In his qualitative study he explored the issue of how librarians in five New

Zealand public libraries defined community standards. He also looked at the part played by guidelines as to what material may be offensive, and the influence of local demographics on community standards. Data from his open ended interviews, originally intended to be coded according to Serebnick's conceptual framework mentioned earlier, were instead coded by actual themes, phrases, items, interpretations and definitions derived from the interviews. His findings showed that there is no clarity amongst librarians about community standards in the multi cultural environment in which they operate, but they nevertheless aim to provide resources that are in demand and cover a range of viewpoints. Other than what is stated in the law, guidelines or recommendations are not provided but decisions are often made by professional judgement and based on the collective experience of staff. The effect of local demographics was inconclusive, with no-one indicating the demographic makeup of the community influenced community standards. Sullivan supported this final point with reference to Scott (1991) who found in a North Carolina study demographics were not useful in determining community standards but that personal views were a better indicator.

The challenge for librarians in the UAE is to gain a clear understanding of what 'community' refers to. As mentioned earlier, there are 202 different nationalities in the UAE, with the local population being a minority of less than 20%. But irrespective of nationality or community, librarians need to be aware of the strong influence of Sharia or Islamic Law, which is the basis of all legal systems in the

UAE. It is primarily concerned with social laws, and as such must be seen in the context of community standards.

To some extent an understanding of community standards in the UAE can be gained by considering the topics about which the state applies censorship. Based on the findings of an extensive 2004-2005 study into internet site blocking in the UAE it is clear several topics are considered undesirable by the state. By carrying out technical testing across multiple levels of access at multiple time intervals, Open Network Initiative (n.d.) identified the most sensitive topics, which in general are those considered by the state to be offensive to Muslims. In particular it includes gambling, homosexuality, promotion of alcohol, opposing views of Islam by ex-Muslims, accounts of former Muslims who have converted to Christianity, a Christian examination of Islam, Baha'i, the occult or cults, and criticism of the role of women in Islam. Topics of a sensitive political nature include Israel, criticism of the government or UAE nationals, and the island of Great Tunb, whose ownership is disputed with Iran. These topics form the focus of my study.

In summary, this section has dealt with the challenges faced in defining community standards particularly in a multi-cultural environment and the role of demographics. It has also focussed on the UAE context by referring to Sharia law which defines acceptable social behaviour and by identifying the aspects of life which are considered by the state to be offensive.

## **2.4 Belief in intellectual freedom**

Central to the literature on intellectual freedom is the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom (1999) which says:

- Libraries shall ensure that the selection and availability of library materials and services is governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral and religious views.
- Libraries shall acquire, organize and disseminate information freely and oppose any form of censorship.

As Byrne (2000a) pointed out, such a statement is ‘enshrined’ in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19: “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers ” (p.58).

Byrne has written at length about the role libraries have to play in ensuring intellectual freedom, which he sees as a fundamental right (2000a, p.57). He believes that “The free flow of information is the business of libraries” (p.58). Because Byrne has written as chair of the Committee on Free Access to Information and Freedom of Expression it must be borne in mind that he argues from this perspective.

Doyle (2002) also believed that access to information is a necessary part of civil society, promoting truth and maintaining a well informed electorate and accountable public officials, which, he said, are essential in a healthy democracy (p.16). This argument is significant in the UAE context insofar as it is not a democratic country but is governed by ruling families within a federal constitutional monarchy. This political structure affects the impact of such concepts as intellectual freedom. The extent to which a librarian feels constrained by this political context may prove to be a factor in decision making.

I now look at examples of state influence on intellectual freedom in countries within the Muslim world.

A description of libraries in Turkish universities at the beginning of this century is the aim of the paper written by Celik (2001). The author provided comprehensive data using IFLA criteria to describe organisation, collection services, facilities, personnel and finance. He noted that legislation prescribes the purpose a library must fulfil, which is to support research and teaching activities of staff and students. He further noted that the Higher Education Law considers the chief librarian of the university library is responsible for all activities regarding libraries. It would have been interesting if he had related this to the lack of clear policies and strategic plans, an area he identified as problematic. It may have been fruitful to pursue how chief librarians reconcile having to take responsibility for decisions with the absence of policies. Another worthwhile consideration to explore in the future



would be the impact of the emerging conflict between the secular and the religious ideologies existing in Turkey in recent years, especially regarding how it impacts on the collection and research activities.

Intellectual freedom and the challenge for academic libraries in Africa is the subject of a recent article by Arko-Cobbah (2010). Here the author took a broad look at the literature dealing with the concepts of intellectual and academic freedom, librarians and academic freedom, and censorship and national security. But apart from a brief mention of censorship based on religion in countries such as Nigeria the article does not deal in any depth with the challenges and opportunities as the title suggests, but is limited to referring to problems of finance, changing technology and information literacy. While he referred to Cullen and Calvert's comment that "many academic librarians in Africa whatever their personal opinions, work in environments where there are religious and political constraints on the kinds of resources that can be held by the library or to which it can provide access" (2001, p.396) he did not elaborate. The article would have been strengthened if examples were provided.

According to Human Rights Watch (2005) state censorship in Egypt has adversely affected the American University of Cairo, Egypt's leading English library. When purchasing material the library is required to submit its packing slips to the censor's office where they are reviewed and some banned. As a compromise, the library now keeps 78 banned books on reserve and prohibits them to be

photocopied. Six of these titles are provided as examples, though it would have been informative to have more. The authors of the article note that librarians accept these restrictions, unwilling to challenge the censorship.

In Iran action and intimidation by the state against writers and publishers have inhibited the development of library collections, with librarians self-censoring for personal protection (Byrne, 2000b).

To sum up, although many writers have written in defence of intellectual freedom, the literature demonstrates that libraries in the Muslim world do not all adhere to that concept, or more particularly, the state does not allow it. An indication of the extent of the librarian's commitment to intellectual freedom needs to be uncovered during this research when considering factors related to decisions.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Book selection decisions in academic libraries are not made in isolation but in a context which is impacted by the library as an entity, the librarians as professional and individual beings, the wider community in which the academic institution exists, and the predominating beliefs about intellectual freedom.

The literature revealed that libraries' collection development policies do not always play a key role in selection practices, and that the demands of the curriculum and input from academic staff have an

effect to a varying extent. Librarians also have an influence, particularly when there is opportunity for personal judgements to be made. There is debate about whether this is a positive or negative thing, as it can be considered a form of censorship. Community standards as defined by Sharia law and state censorship are also suggested as influences on selection practices. Finally, decisions are affected by intellectual freedom beliefs.

Although there is no great paucity in the literature on these general areas of study there is little written specifically in regard to the UAE context. This study therefore focuses on book selection decisions in academic libraries in the UAE and the effect the above variables have on such decisions.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Description**

The purpose of the study is not to test an existing theory but to create or generate a theory. By examining the influence of the independent variables of the library, librarian, community, and intellectual freedom beliefs on the dependent variable of book selection decisions, my aim is to present an explanation or theory on the relationship between them.

Thus a grounded theory or theory-construction approach was used. As described by O'Connell Davidson and Layder the theory-construction approach collects data and empirical evidence from which a theory emerges, ensuring a closer fit between the two (1994, p.283).

A qualitative methodology was used to collect data in which nine participants were interviewed to get their response to twelve book titles. Specifically, the participants were asked to decide if they would consider a given title as acceptable for their student population and to identify the criteria they used to make this decision regarding each of the twelve books.

These questions were followed by more structured questions about the variables of the library, the librarian's nationality, education and religion, the community and perception of community standards, and an indication of beliefs about intellectual freedom.

The data gathered were then analysed to discover possible relationships between the variables and the decisions made. An analysis of responses in relation to collection development policies was also performed.

### **3.2 Method of Gathering Data**

As Sogunro says, the researcher should select strategies that suit the nature of the research (2002, p117). A qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of my study was the participants' view. This approach has been described as 'seeing through the eyes of the people being studied' (Bryman, 2004, p.282) and allows for concepts to emerge from the data rather than being predetermined by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the best technique as they entail 'as little prior contamination of the social world as possible' (Bryman, 2004, p. 282). Participants were also able to provide details of their professional context and to put meaning on their activity.

Further, the tool of semi-structured interviews was chosen to allow for follow up questions and in-depth probing of responses. This proved to be important: because of the context in which the interviews took place some interviewees felt it unnecessary to expand on answers. For example, when asking an Iranian respondent about the book on the Baha'i faith she simply replied 'you know why we cannot allow this book'. As a person living in the Gulf region I am aware that followers of the Baha'i faith are persecuted in Iran and in the UAE they have to practice discreetly, but a wider reading audience would not have this

knowledge, so abbreviated responses needed elaboration. Elaboration was also needed to ensure my assumptions were correct. This was a good example of the interviewer having an effect on the quality of the responses.

### 3.3 Research Population

In order to interview people relevant to the research questions purposive sampling was used. The population of participants consisted of nine librarians, drawn from libraries that include male, female or co-educational student populations. Librarians from rural and an urban communities from across the UAE were included, as well as those from government and private institutions. One participant was specifically chosen because she was a Muslim but as it turned out, three other participants also happened to be Muslim. The participants were those who play a major role in book selection within their library.

The number of nine participants was chosen to allow for the possibility for some degree of comparison, as summarised in the table below.

Institution	Location	Student nationality	Student gender	Librarian nationality	Librarian religion	Librarian qualification
A	urban	international	co-ed	Canadian	non- Muslim	MLIS (in process)
B	urban	Emirati	male	Canadian	non- Muslim	M LS
C	urban	Emirati	female	American	non- Muslim	M LIS
D	urban	international	co-ed	Canadian	non- Muslim	M LS
E	urban	Emirati	female	Emirati	Muslim	B Bus Ad
F	urban	Iranian	co-ed	Iranian	Muslim	M MIB
G	rural	Emirati	male	British	Muslim	MLSc
H	rural	Emirati	female	Canadian	non- Muslim	M LIS
I	urban	international	co-ed	Indian	Muslim	M LIS

*Table 1 Background information about participants*

### **3.4 Pilot Interview**

A pilot interview was performed with a librarian comparable to many of the participants. The purpose was to check for ambiguity or lack of clarity in the questions, to check the order of the questions and to identify if any of the questions made the respondent feel uncomfortable. It also gave an indication of timing which was useful to be able to inform subsequent participants. More importantly it provided an opportunity to find out if the questions elicited a sufficiently rich response.

As an outcome of the pilot interview the wording of one of the questions was slightly altered. Originally the question asked ‘Which nationality is predominant in the community in which your library exists?’ The response indicated that it was thought this referred to the student population whereas the purpose was to consider the wider community. As a result, the question was altered to ‘Which nationality is predominant in the community in which your institution exists?’

The pilot interview also highlighted the necessity of allowing the participant plenty of time to read the brief description of the book and to make a decision, as well as giving plenty of time to answer. A period of silence at the end of each item encouraged the participant to expand further.

The pilot interview also served the purpose of giving the researcher confidence in the interview as a tool and in the recording equipment.

### **3.5 Instrumentation**

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in a private area within the library setting of the participant. Because the UAE is not a large country it was possible to visit various locations and so there was no need for telephone or video interviews. A digital recorder was used, which proved to be very beneficial when transcribing interviews.

Each interview was divided into two parts. The first part was semi-structured, and focused on the dependent variable of selection decisions. Participants were asked to look at each of the twelve book titles and brief synopses, and ignoring budgetary constraints, to decide if each of the twelve books was suitable for their student population. The titles and synopses can be found in Appendix 1. Participants were then asked to talk about criteria upon which they based the decision. The format of the interview allowed the librarians to expand on their responses and give their own perspective.

The interviewees were presented with the list of titles at the time of the interview and not prior. Had the list been received prior to the interview it would have allowed the librarians to consult with colleagues, read reviews and take the time to consider each book. This approach may have been a greater reflection of reality and there would have been advantages to this. However, because I was more interested in their own responses and in their 'gut instinct' I decided to present them with the list at the time of the interview.



The second part was structured and focused on the independent variables of the library's collection development policy, the librarian's background and the influences of the community, Sharia law and intellectual freedom beliefs. These questions can be found in Appendix 2.

It was important that this sequence was followed. If questions were asked about the four independent variables before asking about selection criteria, this might have influenced answers to questions about criteria for selecting.

### **3.6 Treatment of data**

All recordings were downloaded and the files clearly named. Because there were only nine participants, it was possible to then transcribe the data onto an Excel spreadsheet. This data included:

the independent variables of

- a) the library: location, student nationality and gender, use of collection development policy
- b) the librarian: nationality, religion, qualifications' and length of time in the UAE.
- c) the community: perceived influence of the wider community and Sharia law
- d) intellectual freedom

the dependent variables of:

decisions about suitability of books

Firstly, the number of books considered suitable was totalled to give an indication of the extent of a more conservative or more liberal approach, which was then related to different variables. Secondly, the variables were filtered and in this way it was possible to get an idea of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. For example, when the data was filtered by the variable of student nationality it became evident that the book on gambling was only considered unsuitable by all institutions with Emirati students.

Although it made for a very large document interview comments were also transcribed, with a separate cell for each librarian and each book. This enabled the use of the Excel search function to identify and colour repeated or similar words when coding. It also allowed checking for consistency.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

Participants were asked to give their opinion on whether or not particular books were suitable for their collection. The titles were deliberately those dealing with relatively sensitive issues in order to find out boundaries of acceptability. Therefore serious attention had to be given to ethical considerations. This was achieved in the following way.

All participants were informed that the research project had been given approval by the Human Ethics Committee of Victoria University of

Wellington. They were sent an information sheet and consent form, informing them they were able to withdraw before the data were analysed. They understood the interviews would be recorded but that all responses and comments would be anonymised so that it would not be possible for them to be identified personally. They were offered the opportunity to read the transcript of the interview and to receive a summary of the report.

### **3.8 Reliability and Validity**

A thorough explanation of data collection procedure enables the study to be accurately replicated and therefore can be considered to be reliable. Because the interviews were semi-structured, the questions were clearly stated. All interviews were recorded to enhance reliability. Data was collected from multiple sources, namely nine librarians in different contexts. The data from the interviews was triangulated with documentary evidence obtained from collection development policies. According to Gorman and Clayton (2005, p. 24) these are some of the requirements of reliability.

Validity, the extent to which something measures what it claims to measure, can in part be achieved through careful data analysis. Every effort has been made to demonstrate a logical connection between the data and the conclusions drawn from it. Data was fully documented and a chain of evidence was maintained to allow for subsequent checks. Finally participants were invited to review a draft of my report to allow for misrepresentations to be corrected.

### **3.9 Limitations**

In terms of technology the UAE is highly developed as reflected in its internet usage statistics: in June 2010 there were 3,777,900 internet users which is 75.9% of the population (Internet World Stats Usage and Population Statistics). The issue of selection and availability of electronic material in UAE libraries is complex, with there being frequent blocking of sites by the government telecommunications company. In view of this, and the fact that librarians in the internet age still need to make decisions about the addition and removal of print material from their collection, this research was limited to the selection of books. It did not include e-books because that would require all libraries in the study to have a collection, which could not be assumed.

The results are also limited by the number and background of participants, who were selected because of their role in book selection, not by their background, with the exception of one who was purposefully asked to participate because she is an Emirati national and a Muslim. As it turned out the range of participants was not as great as it could have been: for example, four of the nine were Canadian or American. The study was also limited by its size: a study of only nine participants limits any claims that can be made to suggestions only.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings related to research questions 1 and 2**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data related to the first two research questions which focussed on book selection practices and variables associated with selection decisions. These data were gathered through the structured part of the interview.

#### **4.1 Research question 1: What procedures for book selections are practiced in 9 UAE academic libraries?**

##### **4.1.1 Collection development policies**

It was first necessary to find out how many libraries had collection development policies. In response to the interview question ‘Does your library have a collection development policy?’ seven replied they do and two replied they do not.

The significance of a collection development policy varies across the nine libraries. Of the seven librarians whose organisation does not have a policy all but one were brief in their descriptions of it. Two policies were referred to as ‘brief’ or ‘boring’, while one was described as ‘robust and extensive’.

Of the two libraries that do not have a policy, one is part of a central organisation which consists of sixteen different institutions throughout the country. This organisation has a policy but it is ‘simple, brief and

weak' and 'out of date and out of touch' and needs to be rewritten. For this reason two of the four librarians belonging to this central organisation said they did not refer to this policy.

#### **4.1.2 Influences on selection decisions**

The second step was to find out what influences existed on book selections within each library. The interview question asked to what extent book selections were based on collection development policy, curriculum needs, input from academics, personal judgement, and other.

In hindsight, this question could have been worded more clearly. One participant understood it to be asking about the relative role played by each of the four factors and commented that that it was a 'combination' of all of them, and so answered 'somewhat' for all of them. In other words, she felt she could not answer 'completely' for all of them.

All of the other librarians understood it to mean when selecting a book, if the policy accounts for it, to what extent does this guide the decision, and if the curriculum demands it, to what extent does this guide the decision, and so on. This was the intended understanding and most participants understood it this way.

The summary of the findings below indicates a range of practices in the institutions surveyed.

	Collection development policy	Curriculum needs	Input from academics	Personal judgement
completely	5	5	3	1
somewhat	2	4	6	6
not at all	2	0	0	2

*Table 2 Influences on book selection decisions*

Given that these are all academic libraries, it is not surprising that curriculum needs and input from academics influence decisions a little more frequently than policy or personal judgement.

I now discuss the findings from this item in greater depth.

i) Collection development policy

Of the seven librarians who have a policy, five said that selections are completely guided by the policy but one would check with other librarians because the policy is out of date, and another is guided by the policy only because there are loopholes in it which allow her to broaden the collection beyond curriculum need. The other two said they were ‘somewhat’ guided by the policy.

Interestingly, two of those who commented that their policy was brief or outdated said they base their book selections ‘completely’ on the policy.

The two participants who do not have a policy obviously answered no to this, with one commenting that they have a complaints procedure where ‘students can bring arguments about putting books behind closed doors’ which she saw to be a policy of sorts.

Specific collection development policies are examined and discussed in more detail later.

ii) Curriculum needs

Five participants said selections were ‘completely’ based on curriculum needs, one mentioning that this requirement was addressed significantly in the policy, and one mentioning that this was necessary as it was an academic library. The remaining four were ‘somewhat’ influenced by the curriculum, which is interesting given they are all academic libraries.

iii) Input from academics

Academic staff played differing roles in the nine institutions surveyed. In three libraries books are selected if required or requested by teachers. Of these three, in one library teachers can ‘get anything they ask for’ while in another they need to justify their request.

Six of the librarians are ‘somewhat’ influenced by input from academic staff. One mentioned that generally academics are ‘too busy’ to give input and need to be asked, while another commented that if the book is for an academic’s own research interest it may not be purchased.

iv) Personal judgement

Personal judgement does not play a role for two of the librarians. For one of the librarians, an Iranian in an Iranian institution, the collection development is so strongly driven by student and staff need that personal judgement has no place. She commented that ‘we don't use



judgement to buy books' but added the exception that they would use personal judgement in obvious cases, such as the titles used in the interview. She noted that it is 'crystal clear we don't have to buy them'. For her, this required no judgement.

The other participant who felt she does not make decisions based on personal judgement did not elaborate, though interestingly she later commented she very strongly agrees with the intellectual freedom statement.

Six participants felt they based decisions 'somewhat' on personal judgement. One commented that this aspect of decision-making comes into play when it comes to the sensitivity of the material, and she needs to judge if the book would do more harm than good. Another elaborated that as she had been a librarian for a long time she was confident of her ability to read reviews and make an assessment rather than pass it on to someone else to make the decision. A third remarked that although the library's purpose is to meet the curriculum needs she wants to add titles to broaden the collection to give students wider knowledge of the world.

Only one person said that decisions were 'completely' based on personal judgements but then clarified by saying that she needs to use her personal judgement to decide if a title is appropriate for the curriculum.

v) Other

Most participants felt that there were no other major influences on decisions apart from budgetary ones, although two referred to the reading level of the texts, as all institutions have students for whom English is a second language. One mentioned the reputation of the publisher and one mentioned student interest.

To sum up this section, these data suggest that the practice of book selection is more influenced by curriculum needs and input from academics, with the collection development policy being a little less important and personal judgement playing only a smaller role.

**4.2 Research question 2: How do the variables of the library, the librarian, the community and beliefs in intellectual freedom affect selection decisions?**

**4.2.1 The Library**

The student population is a factor in decisions made. The two aspects of student population to consider are gender and nationality/religion.

i) Gender

Separation of men and women is still very common in educational settings in the UAE as many Emirati families believe women should be protected or sheltered while men generally experience greater freedom in their daily lives. Thus it could be expected that libraries with male students would be more liberal than those with female students, but there was no evidence of this. The three women-only institutions

agreed to an average of 6.3 of the titles, while the two men-only institutions agreed to an average of 4.5 of the titles.

Noticeably more liberal were the three of the four co-educational institutions which agreed to an average of eleven of the twelve titles. But these three are also international institutions, so it is difficult to determine which factor underlies the more liberal approach.

ii) Nationality/religion of students

If the number of titles considered to be acceptable can be taken as an indication of a more liberal approach then three libraries stand out, and these libraries are the three whose student population is international unlike the others which are entirely Emirati or Iranian and thus Muslim. The three libraries with international students considered ten, eleven or twelve of the twelve titles to be acceptable.

Conversely the library which is more conservative and would purchase only one of the twelve titles has only Iranian students.

The nationality of the students also seems to play a role when deciding about specific books. For example, the five libraries that have Emirati-only students all agreed they would not purchase the book on gambling and probability, while three librarians from the other four libraries said they would.

#### **4.2.2 The librarian**

Surprisingly length of time in the UAE bore no relationship with decisions. It could have been thought that someone relatively new to the region might not have an awareness of the sensitive nature of some of the topics but there were no data to support this.

Two librarian variables were revealed as being associated with book choice: nationality and religion.

##### **i) Nationality**

One relationship is very clear: the book about the three occupied islands (ownership of which is disputed by Iran and the UAE) was considered as acceptable by all but the Iranian librarian. So in this case, nationality was a strong factor.

Speaking generally, the five western expatriate librarians tended to be more liberal in their approach, agreeing to an average of nine of the twelve books, whereas the four non-western librarians agreed to an average of only 4.5 books.

##### **ii) Religion**

Of the nine participants, four were Muslim but there does not at first appear to be much consistency in their responses. One of the four appeared to be very conservative, agreeing to only one title while another appeared to be more liberal, agreeing to ten. All Muslim participants agreed the title about magic was not acceptable, but this was not unique to them as three non-Muslims also made this judgement. All Muslim participants were also consistent in their

rejection of the book on homosexuality, but so did four of the five non-Muslims. But a closer examination shows that of the four Muslim participants, one does not follow the pattern of the other three respondents, which are all relatively similar. It is hard to speculate why her responses differ from the other three, as she is very similar in many regards to another Muslim respondent: they have both been in the UAE for ten years though neither is from this country so it is not familiarity of the region that makes her different to the others.

Overall, religion appears to be a factor in decisions, with three of the four Muslim librarians being generally more conservative, agreeing to an average of 2.7 books, while the five non-Muslims agreed to an average of eight books.

#### **4.2.3 The community**

Only two participants felt their choices were ‘completely’ influenced by the community but in opposite directions: one of these influences was a positive influence insofar as she felt the international community in which she lived gave her a ‘mandate’ to say yes to most of the titles, while the other was a more negative effect insofar as the more conservative community in which she lived meant she had to say no.

##### **i) Demographics**

The demographics of the community in which the institution exists does not have a particularly strong association with selection decisions. Overall the two rural libraries were on the more conservative end of the spectrum of the number of books selected, but decisions about

specific books did not appear to be associated with rural or urban location.

Geographical location is related to the nature of the community in which the institutions exists, that is, the urban population is very international while the rural population is predominantly Emirati, and this demographic feature seems to have been an influence on the decision about the travel guide of Israel : all six of the seven participants in an international environment accepted this title while both participants in the rural Emirati community would not, with one librarian commenting that no-one from that area would ever travel to Israel so there would be no point in buying it. However, as there are only two librarians in this category the number is too small to make any meaningful observation.

ii) Sharia law

Community standards and an understanding of acceptable social behaviour are based on Sharia law and so it could be thought that an awareness of this law would be a factor in decisions. However this did not prove to be the case. Rather, an understanding of Sharia law has minimal effect on decision making, with seven of the nine assessing it to have no influence, some stating that they did not have enough knowledge of Sharia law to be influenced by it. The two who believe their decisions were influenced 'somewhat' by it are both Muslim, though the other two Muslims were not influenced at all. There is no consistent pattern of responses for either the group who believed it had no impact nor the group who believed it impacted somewhat on them.

#### **4.2.4 Belief in intellectual freedom**

A relationship of some sort can be discerned between belief in intellectual freedom and the degree of conservatism in book selection. The only respondent who agreed to all twelve titles is one of the two who said she agrees ‘completely’ with the intellectual freedom statement. Conversely the respondent who agreed to only two of the titles is the sole person who voiced total disagreement with it. The other six felt they agreed ‘somewhat’ with the statement about intellectual freedom.

The question of intellectual freedom and book selections is discussed in more depth later.

To summarise this section, these data suggest a range of variables may be having an effect on selections to a greater or lesser extent. A possible relationship exists between the gender of the student population and decisions, with female-only campuses being more liberal than male-only campuses, but co-educational international campuses being markedly more liberal. The nationality of students had some effect on specific books, while the nationality of the librarian appears to have had a strong effect on one specific title. Western expatriate librarians tended to be more liberal in their approach than non-western librarians, and Muslims tended to be more conservative than non-Muslims. The location of the community may have an effect, with rural libraries being more conservative. An understanding of

Sharia law showed no impact, and the belief in intellectual freedom seemed to be relevant only at the extremes of the conservative – liberal spectrum of decisions.



## Chapter 5

### Findings related to research questions 3 and 4

In this section the data from the semi-structured interviews are presented, which aims to answer research questions three and four.

#### 5.1 Research question 3: What criteria do librarians use when making a personal judgement about specific books?

##### 5.1.1 Responses to books

To begin to answer this question it is necessary to consider the overall picture of how books were evaluated, the summary of which is in the table below. This summary is followed by an examination of responses to each book.

	Suitable	Not suitable
Dubai : Gilded cage	9	0
The three occupied UAE islands	8	1
In the land of invisible women	7	2
Islam and the Baha'i faith	6	3
Israel and the Palestinian territories	5	4
34 days: Israel, Hezbollah and the war in Lebanon	5	4
Why we left Islam: former Muslims speak out	5	4
Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows	4	5
Probability guide to gambling	3	6
Drink : a cultural history of alcohol	3	6
The tree of life: an illustrated study in magic	2	7
Homosexuality and civilization	1	8

*Table 3 Summary of responses about selection decisions*

##### 1. Dubai : Gilded cage

This is the only book about which all nine participants agreed, and all would be willing to purchase it. Although the synopsis indicates that it is to some extent critical of the Dubai government this feature did not deter people from their positive stance on this book. One participant

commented that it is necessary to be very careful about offending Emirati who 'are very proud and offended by criticism from outside' but does not see anything offensive in the synopsis. She pointed to the fact that it was written by a person with a Muslim name, and that the recession (with which it deals) is 'a really hot issue' and many students do assignments looking at the economy in Dubai.

Another participant concurred with this, saying that her library already has this book. She pointed to it being of interest because it contains local information and that students have a 'keen interest of issues around them in local society', citing examples of students being involved in volunteer activities to assist workers in Dubai.

A third respondent would want to refer to reviews to check how factual or how biased it is but felt this book would provide some balance in the collection. Students are aware that there is a lot of criticism about Dubai from outside and a lot of propaganda from inside, giving a more positive picture than the reality, and this book may provide a more balanced view.

## 2. The three occupied UAE islands

All but one respondent felt this was a very suitable book. The criteria they made their decision on was that it dealt with a local issue, particularly for the institution located in this region, and that it is a 'really hot topic in local politics' with many students doing

assignments on this issue. One participant remarked that it is hard to find material with local content written in English so she usually adds such a book to the collection when she finds one. Another felt that although the reading level was high and may not be accessible to her students its relevance and pertinence meant she would recommend it. A further criterion was that it was from a historical perspective. An Emirati participant felt it was necessary to purchase this book because ‘people should know that the land had belonged to the UAE and taken by Iran’.

Conversely, an Iranian participant felt it was unsuitable because ‘we have a completely opposite view’. She felt it would be biased and written from a UAE perspective.

### 3. In the land of invisible women: a female doctor’s journey in the Saudi kingdom

There was a lot of support for this book based on the criteria that it provided good strong role models for women of which there was a need, especially as it came from this region. As one participant commented ‘people would love this title because they want to know about women in Saudi’. Another implied that if it was critical of the situation of women in Saudi it did not matter as women students in the UAE point out that ‘we are not like them’.

Two other participants acknowledged that it may be slightly contentious by stating that it is ‘is a very politically charged subject but

something we should not ignore'. She added that the fact it is written by a Muslim woman educated in the west would be of interest to students because it would deal with subjects not easily discussed in a more traditional Muslim family, such as sex, marriage and divorce. A second participant noted that it 'raises lots of topics students need to think critically about and does so in a way that is quite safe'.

The two participants who judged this book to be unsuitable did so on the grounds that it was not related to the curriculum and that it was not suitable for a men's college.

#### 4. Islam and the Baha'i faith

Of the six people who felt this was a suitable book two mentioned it as being relevant to Islamic studies and therefore met a curriculum need, and two others referred to it as being of interest. Some uncertainty was expressed and it was mentioned that it could 'create a stir' because of the relationship between Baha'i and Islam. One person felt she would seek advice as to if it should be located in the Arabic section (Baha'i originating from the then Persia which is not part of the Arabic world) as well as to its 'propriety or sensitivity'.

Another participant stated that the library encourages students to access materials that allow them to compare religions, while pointing out that they 'try not to influence students' opinions by what we believe in or what country we are from'. Their aim as a university is to encourage students to be open to different ideas and hoped that there

would be healthy dialogue between the 82 nationalities at that institution. She felt that the fact that it compares modern Islam with other religions as a good thing.

When asked if this book may offend some of her Muslim students one participant agreed it may offend some but for those studying Islam and history in general she felt it would be a good book. She made the point that in her library the idea is to provide materials from which students can self-select.

While those who thought the book to be suitable because it enabled students to compare religions, those who thought it unsuitable did so because they 'don't teach religion and certainly nothing comparative'. Another felt that although different points of view should be allowed 'there should be a limit'. The third person, in whose country the Baha'i faith cannot be practised openly, simply stated that 'we have restrictions. You know why we wouldn't order this one'.

Interestingly, although this topic is considered to be sensitive in the UAE, the Emirati participant had not ever heard the word 'Baha'i' and only two others gave any indication they were aware of its sensitivity.

##### 5. Israel and the Palestinian territories

People were quite evenly divided in their opinions on this title. The five who would purchase it commented that it is a travel book and not a political book, being published by Lonely Planet. But as one librarian

mentioned, she would check to see if there was a bias against the Occupied Territories and if so she would not buy it or would keep it out of the general collection. Another felt that it was a good source for students to read and widen their knowledge of the world. Two participants observed that it also dealt with Christianity, Judaism and Islam which students need to know about.

The four who would not recommend it made their decisions on different criteria. One simply stated that anything with the word 'Israel' in the title would not be allowed, while two felt that as travel to Israel is discouraged the book would not serve the needs of the students or academic staff. The fourth said that the fact that it was about Israel did not rule it out but it was not suitable because of the publisher. She considered Lonely Planet to have too much of an American perspectives so is not the preferred publisher for their travel books. She would select a book on the same topic but from a different publisher.

#### 6. 34 days: Israel, Hezbollah and the war in Lebanon

Most people responded to this book in the same way as to the previous book. Three of the five who considered it suitable saw it as part of a history collection, and others saw it as current, topical and part of contemporary geopolitics. There were some guarded comments though, such as 'I would evaluate the cultural bias of the author - if any - but it does seem to be dealing with both sides of the war in Lebanon'. Another stated that although it looked unbiased she would want to look

more closely at the content. One participant felt that it was designed to be 'inflammatory' but because it was an account that was 'strictly details' she would add it to her collection.

Two of the four who decided this book was unsuitable thought that as the topic was not part of the curriculum it would have no audience and would never be used, while another simply said that 'no-one would ever go there'. The fourth put forth the argument that 'I may be self-censoring but it wouldn't be in the realm of what my mandate is and could also be quite controversial and stir things up unnecessarily'.

#### 7. Why we left Islam: former Muslims speak out

According to one librarian, who already has this book in her collection, 'we as librarians should not self-censor based on what may appeal or offend people'. Although understanding the need to be sensitive she also believes that librarians need to provide students with material on a wide range of topics and let them form their own opinions. A second participant felt it would be a very interesting book to have because she and her colleagues 'challenge students to take criticism and deal with different points of view'. A further argument was that if someone is devoted to Islam it would not be a danger to read about why people leave. Another criterion given was that it would be relevant to the topic of cultural communication, that is, how the west perceives Islam, which is part of the curriculum, and this book would give a different perspective. The final participant cautiously said she would add it to her collection, noting that being written by a Muslim is in its favour

but she would want to see more information about it: if it was well received, not defamatory and more measured, she would purchase it.

Four people thought it to be unsuitable for religious or political reasons. One answered simply ‘definitely not’ while another expanded that it (speaking out against Islam) is ‘not on in Islam’, and thought the book was designed to offend. A third participant said she would never order this book as her institution’s policy would not allow her to keep such a book in the collection, because they want to encourage people to accept the Muslim faith, not leave it. For one participant the title was ‘too political’ so she would not recommend it.

#### 8. Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows

Four of the nine participants would consider this book suitable, three because it could meet student need, such as an assignment on social issues, or a paper on the benefits of being a vegetarian. One librarian, whose institution offers a course in hospitality, went further and said that her students need to be able to read such a book and cope with the fact that some people eat pork, while not losing their values. Another said that non-Muslims should know why they do not eat pork and this book would serve the purpose of broadening their minds.

The criterion given for its unsuitability was twofold: three participants gave reasons of religion, saying that eating pork and dog is ‘haram’ (forbidden) and that in Islam there is no room for a second opinion to debate it. The other two felt it was unsuitable for educational reasons.



It did not match student level of knowledge and would not be very well understood because the ‘whole discussion and references’ would be western-centric and so maybe out of the frame of reference for most of our students’. The second opinion was similar: it would not be discounted because it mentions pigs but there would not be enough interest in the topic and it would serve no educational purpose.

9. Probability guide to gambling

Only three participants could see that this book would be suitable for their students. One participant, acknowledging gambling is disapproved of by Muslims, justified her decision by saying that it is not about how to get rich by gambling but about mathematics, probability, and statistics which would be of interest to her students. A second participant also saw it as a mathematical book despite the way it is presented. She explained that her library already has books on casino tourism but made the point that as they are an international institution with mixed students ‘this dilutes the hit in regard to sensitivity’. The third person who agreed to this book said that people should be aware of the positive and negative sides to gambling, and she would get it for this reason.

Three people would not get this book for religious reasons, with a comment that ‘although it is mathematics it is still about gambling and we are against this’. Another librarian pointed out that there is no place to go gambling here so no-one would be interested in the book, and one person felt that while she would not mind using a book on

gambling to illustrate statistics she felt that students could not manage a whole book on it. One librarian remarked that it would create a lot of objection, so ‘the balance of benefit and cost is not going to work out’.

#### 10. Drink : a cultural history of alcohol

Most people responded the same way to this book as they had to the book on gambling.

For one participant the decision was straightforward: as her institution has a course on hospitality students need to learn about wine. Another participant saw this as fitting into the same category as books on cricket, cooking or knitting. Although they are not specifically linked to courses, students find these types of books interesting and may be used when they are required to give a presentation for example on peer pressure or the effects of alcohol on health. As she points out, she is not encouraging her students to go out and drink but is offering a history book which looks at the myths and truths surrounding alcohol. A third participant saw this book to be relevant to a current issue for which reliable, factual resources are needed. Although alcohol is not permitted for Muslims she reported that many do drink and are in fact alcoholics, which has a lot of social implications making it a topic of study, so the library needs to have material to support it. The fourth person would buy this book because her library users like to read about the psychology of people.

#### 11. The tree of life: an illustrated study in magic

The two participants who found this book suitable both commented that it is also about yoga which young people are interested in. One pointed out that as most of their books come from America 'we can't worry about everything being offensive to everyone'. When talking about this book both participants described the procedure in place for users to follow if they consider something to be offensive, suggesting perhaps that this book could offend.

Those who considered it unsuitable did so for religious reasons, or because it does not fit in to the curriculum. Two also felt it was unsuitable because the subject matter was 'too esoteric' and 'too academic' and another felt that it may appeal as popular reading because there was a lot of interest in superstition, ghosts and magic, but that this particular book may not be the best source of information for them, and that in terms of service to the population the library could find something more useful.

#### 12. Homosexuality and civilization

For the Muslim participants this was a very straightforward decision: homosexuality is very 'haram' (forbidden) and is a subject that should not even be talked about. One participant mentioned in particular that because there were many teenagers amongst her student population she would be concerned that this book may 'divert them'. Others gave the reason that it did not fit into the collection and would not serve any point.

Most of the western expatriate participants found it more challenging to make a decision. All acknowledged it is a 'touchy' subject as homosexuality is illegal, and overt sexuality is not approved of. But one participant commented that sensitivity had 'nothing to do' with her decision, and that they do have a book on gay tourism. Rather, her criterion was that there was no course for which it would be relevant, and that she would consider buying it if she worked in an institution that had a sociology or criminology department.

Another participant found it difficult to say yes or no, and felt she would need to consult with Emirati counsellors about its suitability, as well as with teaching staff to check its relevance.

When the question of graphics arose two respondents mentioned that this would be another reason for not recommending the book. A book showing naked bodies would either have to be kept in the locked Faculty Collection room, or the pictures would need to be covered. If there were only a few pictures this solution could be a possibility, but more than a few pictures would mean the book would have to be defaced which is not desirable.

The only participant who thought it would be suitable for her collection presented the case that it gives a historical perspective of how homosexuality has developed over time, and that it gives a western and non-western perspective. She felt that students need access to information about alternative lifestyles, and that as teenagers they

may wish to read about gender identity. This line of reasoning was particularly important because so many websites are blocked and students may have no choice but to go to book material.

### **5.1.2 Analysis of findings on criteria for decisions**

From these data emerged several criteria by which librarians decided if a book is suitable or unsuitable for their collection. They are discussed below, followed with an examination of the collection development policies of three libraries.

#### Criteria for suitability

Participants decided a book was suitable based on these five criteria (in order of frequency) :

- i) student need or interest
- ii) content
- iii) it encourages students to think critically
- iv) the author
- v) it filled a gap in the collection

These criteria are now examined.

i) Needless to say, student need formed a major part of the reasons for considering a book suitable. Participants commented that the book was related to courses or provided material for students to complete assignments. The participants frequently identified the particular course for which the book would serve a need, such as Islamic Studies, Current Issues or Mathematics. Some specific titles met a need on specific campuses. For example, students studying hospitality had a

need for the book on alcohol and pork, while students studying travel and tourism had a need for the book on the travel guide to Israel. Some librarians in women's campuses felt the book on the woman doctor in Saudi Arabia met a need for their students. Student interest was not of high importance, and only mentioned to justify the selection of the book on magic which referred to yoga. The one librarian who felt the book on homosexuality was suitable argued that 'students need access to information regarding alternative lifestyles' and that the book 'also talks about gender identity which teenagers may wish to read about'. She supported this by adding that because so many websites are blocked students may have no choice but to go to books.

ii) When talking about content participants commented that the book dealt with local and topical issues, and that it was current. Being descriptive, giving 'strictly details', and meeting the need of factual, reliable information was another theme in their discussion. Librarians also noted that the content was not 'defamatory' or 'contentious' but provided a 'positive' account. Finally, a book was considered suitable because it allowed students to gain world knowledge and compare religions. So in general if the content served the purpose of informing readers it was considered suitable.

iii) Encouraging students to think critically was a third criterion for selecting a book. Participants commented that a book should be included if it helps students make informed arguments and form their own opinions. As one librarian said, the book 'raises topics which

students need to think critically about and does so in a way that is quite safe'. When justifying her selection of the book on gambling the participant remarked that 'students should know the advantages and disadvantages of gambling' and another said of the book on eating pork 'other people should know why we don't eat pork so it would broaden other people's minds and knowledge about Islam'. It could perhaps be argued that when a book might be considered contentious librarians in this study justified their decisions by making a case for its inclusion on the grounds that it provided opportunity for students to be exposed to differing viewpoints and debate issues.

iv) A fourth criterion for judging a book's suitability was its author. Two people commented that a book was written by a Muslim author making its contents more acceptable. Another mentioned a book had been written by a Muslim woman which gave it value. Two participants also said they would want to check the books on Israel and Lebanon to check for bias by the author.

v) There were only three comments about books filling a gap in the collection. One comment was in regard to the shortage of books about the UAE, particularly in English, so she purchases one whenever she sees one. Another added that her collection aimed to have a range of topics and included items beyond the curriculum needs, so she would include the titles under discussion. A third comment referred to the book on Dubai adding balance to the collection, specifically in regard to offering both sides of the Dubai story.

### Criteria for unsuitability

Participants decided a book was unsuitable based on these seven criteria (in order of frequency):

- i) content
- ii) curriculum need
- iii) lack of student interest
- iv) role of librarian
- v) perspective or bias
- vi) reading level
- vii) policy

These criteria are now examined.

i) Not surprisingly, books were most frequently considered unacceptable or unsuitable because of their content, and overwhelmingly this was because it was considered offensive to Islam. This was especially true regarding the books on gambling, alcohol, pork and leaving Islam. Most participants simply explained their decisions by citing the fact that the topic was forbidden. One said ‘we want to encourage people to become Muslim, not leave it’ and another said ‘alcohol is forbidden so we don’t go buying books about it’. When talking about rejecting books on the basis of religion, one felt it was better to avoid such books because they would be ‘problematic’.

If the content of the book was related to Israel it was automatically considered unacceptable by some librarians. One comment was that ‘any title with the word Israel wouldn’t be allowed’ and another was that ‘we wouldn’t buy any book that is to do with Israel’.



Other reasons for not selecting included the content being ‘too esoteric’, ‘too academic’ or ‘not scholarly’. Two people commented that the picture on the front of the book on homosexuality also made it unacceptable.

ii) The second most frequently cited criterion for rejecting a book was that it did not fit into the curriculum. Again this is unsurprising considering these libraries were all academic libraries. Most responses indicated that the topic was not curriculum related and therefore there was no need for it. Some made a point of mentioning that they would include a book if it met curriculum needs, despite its sensitivity. For example, one librarian who rejected the book on homosexuality remarked that if there was a course related to it she would purchase it.

iii) Lack of student interest was mentioned as a third reason for not selecting. This was most often the case in regard to the books on gambling, alcohol, carnism and the woman doctor.

iv) The way in which a librarian perceived her role was a theme occurring in some responses. In regard to the book on gambling a librarian said ‘I have to choose carefully when choosing books for and recreational gambling isn't in the mandate of a librarian to serve that need’. When rejecting the book on the war in Lebanon she also made the comment ‘this wouldn't be in the realm of what my mandate is and could also be quite controversial and stir things up unnecessarily’.

Another comment was that it was not up to the librarian to provide books for staff on alcohol.

v) The perspective or bias of the book was a further reason for not accepting a book. The book on the three contended islands was considered unsuitable because the librarian suspected it would be written from a UAE perspective and so would be biased. The book on Israel was considered unsuitable because the publisher Lonely Planet has too much of an American perspective, and the book on carnism was predicted to contain discussion and references which were ‘all western centric and so maybe out of frame of reference for most of our students’.

vi) Three librarians mentioned the reading level or level of English to be a reason for rejecting a book, which is pertinent in an environment where English is a second language and reading skills are considered to be relatively poor.

vii) Finally, there was only one comment that ‘the policy would not allow us to keep a book on this subject [leaving Islam]’. Interestingly, the interview subsequently indicated that this library does not have a collection development policy and hence decisions are not based on this. One must assume it refers to a more general policy.

### **5.1.3 Evidence from collection development policies**

To what extent are the criteria given by librarians supported by their collection development policies? To answer this, collection development policies were examined. Of the seven librarians who said they made decisions based on their collection development policy, four belonged to a central organisation whose policy was outdated, currently being rewritten and so is not used in any significant way. The remaining three were examined and discussed below.

In the first case where the librarian stated she was ‘somewhat’ influenced by the policy the most important criteria for selection according to the policy was authoritativeness of the publisher. Because the publisher was not included in the description of the books she could not apply this criterion, though she did mention that this information was important. According to the policy, the second most important criterion is the significance of the subject matter and the fifth is the potential use by patrons. In most responses she related her choice to a particular course or assignments a student might write. The third criterion on the list is the importance of the author but the librarian does not refer to this at all. The fourth criterion is accuracy of information and date of publication. Apart from one mention of a book being recent, this criterion was not applied. The ninth most important criterion according to the library’s policy was scarcity of materials on the subject. This matched the little importance given by the librarian

who mentioned only once that she would choose a book because there is so little written about the UAE.

Many of the responses given by this participant about criteria for selection referred to providing students with the opportunity to make informed arguments and debate issues, which reflect the institution's goal of helping students to develop critical thinking skills.

This institution's collection development policy makes a point of mentioning intellectual freedom. Specifically it says that the library follows the 'policies and guidelines of the American Library Association as they relate to [these students]. They do not apply to use by the larger community due to the sensitive nature of our collection and UAE law'. This comment underlies many of the responses made by the participant.

Overall it could be said that data from documentary evidence supports data from this participant's interview. This finding was also the case in the second example in which the participant said she completely bases decisions on the policy, but only because 'it has loopholes in it which allows us to broaden the collection beyond curriculum needs'. The first priority according to the policy is for relevance to curriculum subjects and this was the basis for many of her decisions. For example she would choose the book on Israel because of their tourism course, she would choose the book on gambling because it related to an advanced mathematics course and she would choose the books dealing wine and pork because their hospitality students would benefit from it. As well

as curriculum needs the policy also mentions it gives priority to books about the UAE and the Gulf region, general interest items, and titles not in the curriculum for reference, recreation and general knowledge. The first of these factors was mentioned when talking about the book on Dubai, and the book on magic was justified because it mentions yoga which, she says 'young people are interested in'.

The policy's second criterion is quality, meaning the reputation of the publisher and author. In the beginning of the interview she made the point the publisher would have been one of her criterion but these were not provided. The level of the book is the third of the policy's criterion but this is not mentioned as a reason for her selection. Currency is the fourth criterion and she mentions this twice as a factor in her decision. The current collection and requests from academics are the next two criteria. They are assigned less importance in the policy and no importance in the librarian's decisions.

The third example of a collection development policy is very brief and states that priority is given to prescribed and recommended text as well as to requests from students or lecturers providing they are relevant to courses, within budgetary constraints, do not promote commercial interests, are well balanced, current and consistent with the emphasis of the university. The librarian agreed to books that related to their Islamic Studies course, their tourism course and their history collection. In her discussion she does not refer to currency of books or their being well balanced. The majority of her explanations for

inclusion are that students 'would like to know about this' or 'it is good for people to know about this'. According to the graduate qualities of this institution, being informed about current issues is given a high priority so perhaps her explanations are related to this goal.

In summary, although only three documents were cross-checked against data from interviews, the findings suggest that confidence can be held in the reliability of the data.

## **5.2 Research question 4: How do librarians rationalise selection decisions in the light of intellectual freedom beliefs?**

The issue of intellectual beliefs was a theme throughout the interviews, both in response to a direct question and when giving criteria for selection.

When asked about the extent to which participants agreed with the IFLA statement on intellectual freedom, two said they completely agreed, one person did not agree at all, and the remaining six said they agreed somewhat with the statement. As a variable it appears to play some part with there being some sort of relationship between completely agreeing and the number of books selected, and not agreeing at all and the number of books not selected. This is not to say that there is a causal relationship between the two, that is, reasons for not selecting books did not specify intellectual freedom.

The participant who did not agree with the statement at all did so for philosophical reasons. The argument was presented that the statement itself is political and ‘just a lot of waffle’, adding that ‘everyone has a political and moral view’. According to this participant, the statement was not ‘real’ and of ‘no practical use to me’.

What is of more interest is how librarians explained their position in regard to intellectual freedom. Those who answered that they somewhat agreed and even those who said they completely agreed, in effect said “I agree, but....”

One view was that it is the duty of librarians to provide several points of view from which students can form their own opinions. She herself was opposed to censorship and had to assume students were mature enough to censor a book themselves. She argued that ‘we as librarians should not self-censor based on what may appeal or offend people’. However at the same time she acknowledged that she is serving a Muslim population and some books may be considered offensive. Her approach was that books should be made available alongside a mechanism for complaint.

This comment about the possibility for students to complain was mentioned a few times and it seemed to be a safety net which allowed librarians to test boundaries of acceptability. One librarian described it as ‘walking a line’ between giving access and not drawing attention to

a book in a way that may backfire and lead to ‘rules and rebellion’ that would hinder the ability to provide other less contentious material.

Participants also reconciled their belief in intellectual freedom and their inability to practice it by talking about respect for other cultures and beliefs. One summarised her approach by saying ‘it's a matter of respect, not censorship’. Another said ‘I don’t believe in stifling intellectual freedom but I do believe in respecting people's beliefs’, adding that ‘personally I believe in intellectual freedom but practically I don't have right to put that into practice here’. Another commented that although she holds intellectual freedom as a core value and the reason for going into librarianship, she does not have the right to push her beliefs onto another culture.

Some of the western expatriate participants differentiated between being in their home countries where they would completely agree and being in the UAE context, where they ‘have learnt to work within certain constraints’. One person said that ‘I see that this culture is not a free culture or a democracy. I have to follow the rules here and some of the censorship that occurs. Much as I may not like it I have to accept it’. She did not see her role as making any fundamental changes about this situation but would be ‘willing to push the envelope a little’ to see if gradual changes could be made to the collection. Thus putting intellectual beliefs into practice very much depended on the context in which a librarian lives. Interestingly one librarian felt that her students



were 'pretty open-minded' and that she would respond differently if she were 'in a place less open than this one'.

Some librarians hinted that they had a role to play in changing attitudes to intellectual freedom. For example, in one library a student had removed a whole chapter in a book on extremist Islam. The library kept the book but noted on the cover that it was not the library's decision to remove the chapter. Another commented that 'we are working in a library to try to increase the level of access and exposure and freedom that our students have to pursue things they want to' but added that it has to be a gradual process taking things step-by-step. Another participant made the point that she would like to see if, on a case by case basis, she could get some things that might be borderline to be included and 'see what happens'. The Emirati participant felt that, in terms of practicing intellectual freedom in the UAE 'we are getting there slowly. It will take time. It is changing'.

One participant made the distinction between her own personal beliefs and what the institution would allow, commenting that 'here we have regulations and laws that do not allow us to have some books'.

Finally one librarian limited her practice of intellectual freedom because 'there would be lots of controversy if you had complete intellectual freedom'. Avoiding controversy is mentioned as a reason for not selecting books, with librarians not wanting to 'stir things up unnecessarily' and deciding a book would be 'problematic so best to

avoid it'. One way of dealing with this was keeping sensitive material in a locked Faculty Room, which seemed to be a compromise for at least one librarian.

To summarise, librarians rationalised the lack of correspondence between their belief in intellectual freedom and their practice by referring to the need to balance personal beliefs with the need to respect the culture in which they live, the need to allow attitudes to censorship and intellectual freedom to change gradually, and to the desire to avoid controversy.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

In the relatively new but rapidly developing country of the UAE where the field of Library and Information Science is not well established, librarians, many of whom are not native to this country or of the Islamic faith, face the challenge of meeting the contradictory demands emerging from different sets of values when selecting books. The question arises of whether Muslim values should determine selection practices or should they be based on the values inherent in intellectual freedom.

Robust collection development policies could serve to resolve this dilemma but the current study suggests that such practice is not the case in the UAE. This finding is not inconsistent with findings by Siddiqui (1998).

The first research question to be considered aimed to shed light on selection practices. The finding is that where policies exist they prioritise criteria for selection, primarily focussing on curriculum demands, the publisher and the date of publication. These criteria are to be expected in academic libraries, and support findings discussed in the literature review. However, most libraries surveyed also aim to meet recreational reading needs and policies do not deal with this. Further, the policies do not provide guidelines to support librarians in decisions about books related to sensitive topics, even if they meet a curriculum need. For example, the book on gambling meets a

curriculum need because it is about statistics and probability, but clearly it also deals with a sensitive topic.

Another finding about prevalent selection practices was that curriculum need and input from academic staff were more influential on decisions than collection development policy and personal judgement, which supports findings by (Ameen, 2010).

The second objective of the study was to explore how selection decisions are affected by a range of variables. In looking at the first variable of the library a surprising finding was that libraries with a women-only student population were considerable more liberal in their decisions than all-male institutions. A less surprising result was that the most liberal libraries were those with a co-educational student population, who were also international in terms of nationality.

The second variable under consideration was the librarian. Findings indicate that the librarian's nationality and religion appear to be a factor associated with decisions. The five librarians from western backgrounds on average agreed to twice as many titles as the librarians from non-western backgrounds, while non-Muslims agreed to an average of three times as many books as Muslims.

The significance of these findings lies in the fact that in the absence of comprehensive policies about dealing with sensitive topics which may at the same time meet a curriculum need, librarians may find

themselves having to employ personal judgement. In this regard religious and cultural values appear to determine whether the book is acceptable or not. If policies are 'statements about decisions the library has made in relation to the function it performs or services it provides' (Osborne and Gorman, 2006, p73) then it needs to be borne in mind that it is the librarian who puts the policy into practice, and it may be factors associated with the librarian that also determines the function and services of a library. As this study shows, it is possible that librarians from a western, non-Muslim background provide a different service to those from a non-western, Muslim background.

As well as librarians' religious and cultural backgrounds, their desire to avoid controversy may affect which books make their way to the shelf. Byrne's (2003) argument that clear policies would avoid such self-censorship finds some support in this study. Where librarians were faced with a decision for which the policy did not advise, they at times chose the safer path so as to avoid controversy. Taking this option echoes Moody's concern that librarians self-censor perhaps unconsciously or more deliberately when faced with challenges from colleagues or the community (2004).

Libraries, even academic libraries, function within a wider community and this was the third variable investigated. Librarians need to be aware of contravening culturally acceptable norms of behaviour and values. In the UAE these values are expressed in Sharia law and in state decisions about censorship. While Sharia law did not appear to

influence librarians' decisions an appreciation of sensitive issues did. Many decisions not to select a book were based on an awareness of Emirati community standards and forms of behaviour considered offensive to Muslims.

The issue of censorship is related to the concept of intellectual freedom. Like other librarians in the Muslim world, and indeed elsewhere, librarians in the UAE grapple with this concept. Despite their attitude and beliefs, librarians, particularly those from a western background, acknowledge the need to work within the constraints of their environment. Compromise was at times necessary, either by judicious selections that gradually broadened notions of acceptability, or by making contentious books available for academic staff only.

The third objective of this research was to identify criteria used by librarians when making a personal judgement about specific books. The criteria identified were: student need or interest; the content of the book; the potential of the book to encourage critical thinking; the author; and the capacity of the book to fill a gap in the collection. Conversely the criteria for not selecting a book included: its unsuitable content; failure to meet curriculum need; lack of student interest in the topic; perception of the librarian's role; concern about the author's or publisher's perspective or bias; the reading level; and the institution's policy.

The final objective of the study was to explore how librarians reconcile their belief about intellectual freedom with selection decisions. In general librarians acknowledged the disparity between their belief and their practice but argued that there was a need to respect the culture in which they live and work which meant constraints on decisions. Some librarians also referred to the need to avoid controversy. This unwillingness to challenge but to accept restrictions gives some support to the findings in the Human Rights Watch (2005) study of the American University of Cairo library.

Finally, this was an exploratory study which has gone some way in revealing the practices and challenges faced by librarians in the UAE but like all studies of its size it has to be modest in its claims. A quantitative study involving the thirty or so academic institutions of reasonable size within the UAE may provide stronger evidence to support the findings of this study. A wider range of libraries may also provide more variety of librarian nationality: by chance, five of the nine participants were from North America, which may not be reflective of the librarian population in the UAE.

Although this study did not do so, it would be a worthwhile future study to determine to what extent, if any, librarians justify their personal decisions by citing one of the above criteria. For example, a librarian who might consider the book on gambling and statistics to be unacceptable because of her own beliefs may cite the convenient reason that it does not meet a curriculum need. Similarly a librarian

may reconcile her belief in intellectual freedom with her wish to avoid controversy when faced with selecting a contentious book such as the book on magic by claiming that the content would be too esoteric, for example.

The rapidly developing country of the UAE is aiming to reduce its reliance on oil by becoming a knowledge based economy. Any future research on academic libraries will contribute to this goal.



## Bibliography

- Allen, C. M. (2007). Are we selecting or are we censoring? *Young Adult Library Services, Spring*, 5.
- Ameen, K. (2010). The culture of collection evaluation in Pakistan. *Library Philosophy and Practice*.
- Arko-Cobbah, A. (2010). Intellectual freedom and academic freedom : opportunities and challenges for academic libraries in Africa. Retrieved from [http://www.codesria.org/\\_Arko\\_Cobbah.pdf](http://www.codesria.org/_Arko_Cobbah.pdf)
- Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Bucher, K. T., & Manning, M. L. (2007). Intellectual freedom for young adolescents. *Childhood Education*, 84(1). Retrieved from <http://proquest.umi.com.library.hct.ac.ae/?did=137293410>
- Byrne, A. (2000a). Promoting intellectual freedom globally through libraries: the role of IFLA. *Libri*, 50, 57-65 .
- Byrne, A. (2000b). Libraries and Intellectual Freedom [Special issue]. *IFLA Journal*, 26(4).
- Byrne, A. (2003). The end of history: censorship and libraries. *The Australian Library Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.alia.org.au//.2/.text/.html>
- Çelik, A. (2001). University libraries in Turkey: a state of the art review. *Information Development*, 17, 85-91. doi:10.1177/
- Cullen, R., & Calvert, P. J. (2001). International perspectives on academic libraries. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 27(5), 394-397. Cited in Arko-Cobbah, A. (2010).

- Davidson, C. M. (2008). Dubai's stifled voice: Censorship vs progress in the UAE. In *Open Democracy*. Retrieved August 3, 2010, from <http://www.opendemocracy.net/s-stifled-voice-censorship-vs-progress-in-the-uae>
- Davidson, G., & Dorner, D. (2009). Selection criteria for mobile library collections. *Collection Building*, 28(2), 51-58.
- Doyle, T. (2002). Selection versus censorship in libraries. *Collection Management*, 27(1), 15-25.
- Gorman, G. E., & Clayton, P. (2005). Exploring qualitative research. In *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional: a Practical Handbook* (2d ed., pp. 20-23). London: Facet Publishing.
- Greenland, J. (2009). *The classification and use of controversial picture books in New Zealand public libraries* (INFO 580 project). New Zealand: Victoria University of Wellington.
- Gyeszly, S. (2010). Qatar's Education City's university libraries: patrons, collections, and services. *Collection Building*, 29(3), 84-90. Retrieved from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/-4953.htm>
- Gyeszly, S., & Ismail, M. (2003). American University of Sharjah Library: a collection development project. *Collection Building*, 22(4), 167-176. doi:10.1108/
- Reading between the "red lines": the repression of academic freedom in Egyptian universities (2005, June 8). *Human Rights Watch*, 17(6). Retrieved on 17 September 2010 from <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/11714/section/3>

- IFLA. (n.d.). Professional codes of ethics for librarians. *IFLA*.  
Retrieved April 15, 2010, from <http://www.ifla.org///codes-of-ethics-for-librarians>
- IFLA. (1999). Statement on libraries and intellectual freedom. *IFLA*.  
Retrieved August 3, 2010, from <http://www.ifla.org///ifla-statement-on-libraries-and-intellectual-freedom>
- Open Network Initiative* Internet filtering in the United Arab Emirates in 2004-2005: a country study. (n.d.). Retrieved May 9, 2010, from <http://opennet.net/#toc2a>
- Internet World Stats Usage and Population Statistics*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 3, 2010, from <http://www.internetworldstats.com//.htm>
- Moody, K. (2005). Covert censorship in libraries: a discussion paper. *The Australian Library Journal*, 54(2).  
Retrieved from <http://www.alia.org.au///.2/>
- Munro, B., & Philips, P. (2008). A collection of importance: the role of selection in academic libraries. *Australian Academic and Research Libraries*, 39(3), 149-170.
- O'Connell Davidson, J. & Layder, D. (1994) The research process: theory and evidence. In *Methods, Sex and Madness* (pp41-49). London: Routledge, 1994.
- Osborne, S., & Gorman, G. (2006). Community consultation and collection development policies in medium-sized New Zealand public libraries. *Libri*, 56(2), 73-82.
- Population leaps to 8.19 million. (2010, May 30). *UAE Interact*.  
Retrieved from <http://www.uaeinteract.com/>

- Reporters Sans Frontieres (n.d.). *Press freedom index 2009*. Retrieved August 5, 2010, from <http://en.rsf.org/freedom-index-2009,1001.html>
- Reece, G. (2005). Multiculturalism and library exhibits: sites of contested representation. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 31(4), 366-72.
- Scott, J. E. (1991). What is obscene? Social science and the contemporary community standard test of obscenity. *International journal of law and psychiatry*, 14(1-2), 29-45. Cited in Sullivan, M. T. (2007).
- Serebnick, J. (1979). A review of research related to censorship. *Library Research*, 1(2), 95-118. Cited in Sullivan, M. T. (2007).
- Siddiqui, M. A. (1998). Academic libraries in Saudi Arabia. *The Reference Librarian*, 28(60), 159 -177. doi:10.1300/v28n60\_11
- Snow, R. (1996). Wasted words: the written collection development policy and the academic library. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 22, 191-4.
- Sogunro, O. (2002). Selecting a quantitative or qualitative research methodology. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 26(1), 3-10.
- Sullivan, M. T. (2007). *Community standards in New Zealand public libraries: an exploratory study* (INFO 580 project). New Zealand: Victoria University of Wellington.
- 202 nationalities in labour market. (2006, August 26). *Khaleej Times* . Retrieved from [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/.asp?section=theuae&xfile=data//\\_august735.xml](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/.asp?section=theuae&xfile=data//_august735.xml)

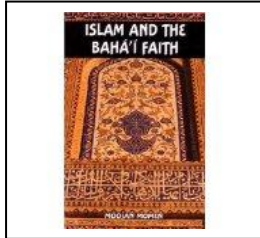
United Arab Emirates Publications Law (1980) Retrieved on 5 August  
2010 from [http://www.scribd.com/doc/325533/UAE-Publications-  
Law](http://www.scribd.com/doc/325533/UAE-Publications-Law)

United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.  
Retrieved from <http://www.udhr50.org//.htm>

## Appendix 1

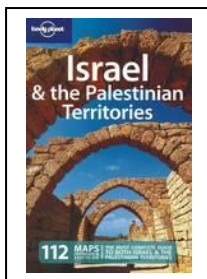
### Titles and synopses

1. Islam and the Baha'i faith : a comparative study of Muhammad 'Abduh and 'Abdul-Baha 'Abbas. By Oliver Scharbrodt. (2008)



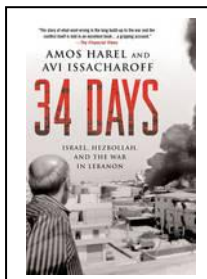
Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) was one of the key thinkers and reformers of modern Islam who has influenced both liberal and fundamentalist Muslims today. 'Abdul-Baha (1844-1921) was the son of Baha'ullah (1817-1892), the founder of the Baha'i Faith; a new religion which began as a messianic movement in Shii Islam, before it departed from Islam.

2. Israel and the Palestinian Territories (A Lonely Planet Country Guide). By Michael Kohn and Dan Savery Raz. (2010)



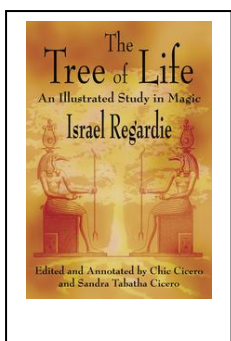
Religious tourism remains a big draw to visit this region for all 3 major religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. This guide covers the whole region including the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. It also includes a chapter on Petra in Jordan and Sinai Peninsula in Egypt.

3. 34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah, and the war in Lebanon. By Amos Harel. (2009)



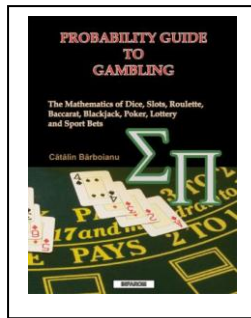
The border abduction of two Israeli soldiers on the morning of July 12, 2006 set in motion what would become known as the Second Lebanon War. After 34 days and more than 5,000 casualties a ceasefire was signed, and the geopolitics of the region were changed immeasurably. This book reconstructs the progression of the war and it also delves into the diplomatic battles that took place in Paris, Washington, and New York, which would eventually end the war.

4. The tree of life: an illustrated study in magic. By Israel Regardie. (2000)



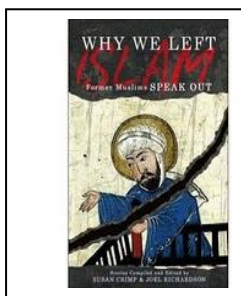
The author begins with an explanation of what magic is and, just as importantly, what magic is not. He explains that it is a spiritual study and practice which, along with forms of yoga, forms the two branches of the tree that is mysticism. Magic is not being a medium or a psychic. Then he explains the tools of the magician, what they mean, and how to use them. He explains the techniques of evocation and invocation, skrying, and astral travel.

5. Probability guide to gambling: the mathematics of dice, slots, roulette, baccarat, blackjack, poker, lottery and sport bets. By Catalin Barboianu. (2006)



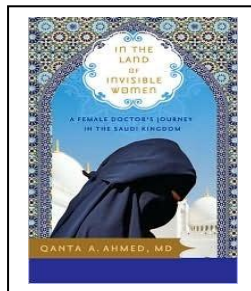
This book presents the mathematics underlying games of chance and provides a precise account of the odds associated with all gaming events. It begins by explaining in simple terms the meaning of the concept of probability and the mathematics of chance, randomness and risk. It then continues with the basics of discrete probability (definitions, properties, theorems and calculus formulas), combinatorics and counting arguments for those interested in the supporting mathematics.

6. Why we left Islam: former Muslims speak out. By Susan Crimp and Joel Richardson. (2008)



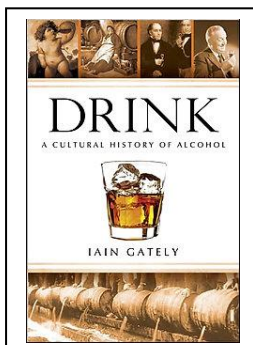
This book contains first-person stories of former radicals who began to question the Quran and who have changed their lives.

7. In the land of invisible women: a female doctor's journey in the Saudi Kingdom By Qanta A. Ahmed (2008)



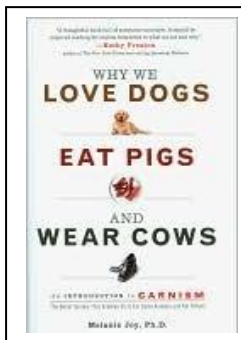
This is a memoir recounting the author's experiences practicing medicine in the Saudi Kingdom. It provides a picture of what life is like in the Saudi Kingdom, from the perspective of a western educated Muslim woman. It includes chapters on marriage and divorce, the religious police, sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, and sycophancy as well as recounting her inspiring journey to Mecca which strengthens her Muslim faith.

8. Drink: a cultural history of alcohol. By Iain Gately. (2009)



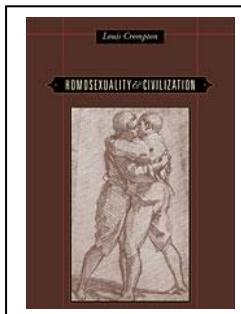
This book traces the history of alcohol from ancient Egypt to the modern day. It looks at the drinking habits of famous people, and considers the past and present controversies surrounding alcohol, and examines myths and truths about alcohol.

9. Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows: an introduction to carnism .  
By Melanie Joy. (2010)



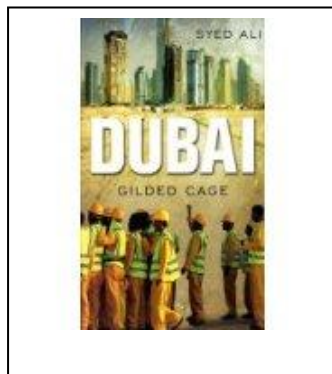
This book explores the invisible system that shapes our perception of the meat we eat, so that we love some animals and eat others without knowing why. She calls this system carnism, which is the belief system, or ideology, that allows us to selectively choose which animals become our meat, and it is sustained by complex psychological and social mechanisms.

10. Homosexuality and civilization. By Louis Crompton. (2006)



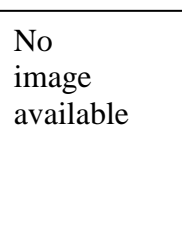
This book consists of an encyclopedic survey of homosexuality, gender identity and homophobia in Western and non-Western civilizations and provides a comparative and historical point of view.

11. Dubai: Gilded Cage. By Syed Ali. (2010)



This provides a case study of Dubai's rapid development, looking at economic and labour conditions, foreign workers and the law, and government policies. The author goes beneath the surface and examines the paradoxes and contradictions of Dubai society. The author charts Dubai's decline as the global recession took hold early in 2009, with the current crisis severely tarnishing the city's image.

12. The three occupied UAE islands: The Tunbs and Abu Musa. By Thomas R Mattair (2005)



Documenting the historical record and examining the relevant international precedents, this comprehensive study assesses the legal and sovereign rights of the United Arab Emirates over the three islands. The study is based on extensive research in both primary and secondary sources. The book offers insight on the historical, political, legal, regional and international dimensions of the islands issue for the benefit of policy-makers, academics, researchers and decision-makers concerned with the future security and instability of the Gulf region.



## Appendix 2

### Interview schedule

#### Part A:

“I would like you to imagine you have received a request to purchase each of the books on the list. Ignoring budgetary constraints, I’d like you to take into account your library users and decide if you would consider these books suitable for purchase. When deciding, I’d like you to say on what basis you made your decision. Even if it is unlikely to receive such a request from your users, I’d like you to indicate whether you would hypothetically find this title suitable or not, and why”.

#### Part B:

##### The Library

1. Does your library have a collection development policy?
2. To what extent do you base your book selections on
  - a) collection development policy? ☐ Completely ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
  - b) curriculum needs? ☐ Completely ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
  - c) input from academics? ☐ Completely ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
  - d) personal judgement? ☐ Completely ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
  - e) other?

##### The Librarian

3. What is your nationality?
4. Are you a Muslim?
5. What are your professional qualifications and from where did you obtain them?
6. How long have you worked in this library?
7. How long have you lived in the UAE?

##### The Community

8. Which nationality is predominant in the community in which your library exists?
9. To what extent do you feel influenced in your selection decisions by the community in which you work? ☐ Completely ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all
10. To what extent does your understanding of Sharia (Islamic) law influence your decisions? ☐ Completely ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all

##### Beliefs about intellectual freedom

11. To what extent do you agree with the International Federation of Library Associations Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom, that is:

*“Libraries shall ensure that the selection and availability of library materials and services is governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral and religious views.*

*Libraries shall acquire, organize and disseminate information freely and oppose any form of censorship”*

☐ Completely

☐ Somewhat

☐ Not at all

☐ Neutral

### Appendix 3



#### **Participant Information Sheet for a Study of Book Selection**

Researcher: Niall Flanigan School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Masters student in Information Studies in Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. As part of this degree I am undertaking this research project which examines the factors influencing book selection decisions by academic librarians in the United Arab Emirates. Because my research involves human participants I am required by my university to obtain ethics approval.

I am inviting librarians in a range of libraries to participate in this study. If you agree to participate I will ask you in a recorded interview to look at a list containing twelve book titles with a brief description of each. You will be asked to decide if you would consider each title to be suitable for your library users and the criteria you used to make this decision.

Secondly you will be asked to provide information about your library, your background, the community your library serves, and your beliefs about intellectual freedom.

If you wish to withdraw from the project you may do so at any time before the data is analysed.

Data from these interviews will be analysed and form part my research project. All responses and comments will be anonymous. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally.

All material collected will be kept confidential. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Dan Dorner, will see the report. The project will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Recorded interviews and notes will be destroyed at the end of the project.

If you have any questions or require further information about this research project please email me at [niall8@hotmail.com](mailto:niall8@hotmail.com) or [n.flanigan@mdx/ae](mailto:n.flanigan@mdx/ae). Alternatively you can phone me at Middlesex University Library in Dubai at 04-3678124. If you wish to contact my supervisor you may do so by emailing [Dan.Dorner@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Dan.Dorner@vuw.ac.nz)

## Appendix 4



### Consent to Participation in Research

Title of project: The factors influencing book selection decisions by academic librarians in an Arabic Islamic context

I have been given an explanation and understand the nature and purpose of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I have been satisfied with the answers given.

I understand that I may withdraw myself and my information from this project at any time prior to the data being analysed.

I understand that I will not be identified in any written report and that the information and opinions I provide will remain confidential to the researcher and his supervisor. The recorded interviews will be destroyed at the end of the project. I will be given a copy of the interview transcript and a summary of the final report if I wish.

I agree to participate in this research project.

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to obtain a summary of the final report: ☐ Yes ☐ No